

Milk supply and milk flow

Milk supply is not usually affected if the shield is used correctly and for a short time i.e. a few days or weeks.

The milk flow may be slightly slower when using a shield so expect feeds to take a little longer.

Gently pressing on your breast with your hand during the feed (breast compression) can help with milk flow.

If your breast still feels full after the feed, express some milk until breast feels comfortable.

Use of a nipple shield may change your baby's sucking action and make it difficult for your baby to return to direct breastfeeding.

How to wean off the shield

Sometimes this may be difficult and can take a few weeks to achieve.

It is best to try within 1 to 2 weeks of using the shield. Start the feed with the shield and then remove it once the baby is sucking well. The nipple is drawn out which may make direct attachment easier.

For assistance

Contact your Lactation Consultant or a Midwife for further support.

East Grampians Health Service:
(03) 5352 9321

Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA)
24 hour helpline 1800 686 268

www.breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/nipple-shields



Improving the health of our community

A guide to using a nipple shield

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EGHS would like to thank our consumers for reviewing this information.



What is a nipple shield?

A nipple shield is a thin silicone cover that is placed over the nipple to assist in breastfeeding.

How can a shield help me?

- When your baby is having problems attaching or staying on the breast.
- If your nipples are flat or inverted and your baby cannot attach, the nipple shield will help to bring the nipple out.
- If you are experiencing nipple pain or trauma that has not responded to correct positions and attachment.
- If your baby is premature and has difficulty maintaining attachment.
- Transitioning baby from artificial teats to the breast.
- If your baby has unusual suckling difficulties and has not responded to alternative management.
- If you have eczema or psoriasis on your nipple that may cause pain while feeding.

How do I use it?

1. Nipple shields should only be used once milk has come in and NOT beforehand. Milk needs to have a good flow for transfer to occur. Colostrum is small in amount, thick and sticky and won't flow through the shield.
2. Prior to your milk coming in you can hand express the colostrum to feed your baby.
3. Wash and dry hands before use.
4. Make sure the nipple is clean to prevent infections.
5. Express a few drops of milk into the shield and smear onto the outside to help it stay in place.
6. Place half of the shield on the underside of your areola and nipple. Gently pull the shield up and over your nipple to the top of the areola.
7. Check the position of the shield and ensure your nipple is centrally positioned. This helps to create a seal and prevent rubbing of your nipple. The nipple should not look squashed or tight as this can lead to nipple damage.
8. Hold the shield in place with your hand and spread widely over the edges.
9. Encourage your baby to open widely by brushing their lips with the shield, then bring baby quickly onto the shield. The shield should not be slipping and sliding back and forward in your baby's mouth.

Signs that your baby is well attached

- Your baby's lips should be touching the underside of the areola not just touching the teat of the shield, the bottom lip turned out.
- As your baby sucks, listen to hear your baby swallowing the milk like a gulping sound. This is a good sign that your baby is getting milk.
- When your baby comes off the breast, check to see if there is a small puddle of milk in the shield. This is a good sign that the baby is getting milk.

Cleaning and storing your nipple shield

After each use, the shield:

- Should be washed in hot soapy water, rinsed and air dried thoroughly.
- Be kept clean in an airtight container.
- If your baby has thrush, sterilise after each use.

Not cleaning the nipple shield thoroughly can cause problems and lead to nipple infections such as thrush.